



MOVING TO MANAMA

Pre-Arrival Information

Prepared by the CLO office & Public Affairs Office

**American Embassy
Manama, Bahrain**

Building 979, Road 3119
Manama, Bahrain

Your Mailing address:
Unit 6210, Box 312
FPO AE 09809-0612

WORK WEEK: Sunday through Thursday

CLOSED: Friday and Saturday and all official US and Bahraini holidays

BUSINESS HOURS: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. workdays

CONSULAR SECTION: 8 a.m. - 12:30 a.m. workdays (except Sunday), open to the public
1 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Tuesdays

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES: 8 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. workdays

TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Business Hours: 1727-2700

Emergency (after hours): 1724-2957

CLO Office: 1724-2772

Telephone Numbers, Manama

American Embassy:	Business hours	1724-2700
	After hours emergency	1724-2957
	Community Liaison office	1724-2772

Emergency – Fire, Police, Ambulance	999
IDD to the U.S.	001 plus area code and #
Directory Inquiries	181
Flight Information	1732-5555

MAJOR HOTELS

Diplomat Hotel	1753-1666
Gulf Hotel	1771-3000
Regency Inter-Continental Hotel	1722-7777
Sheraton Hotel	1753-3533
Ritz Carlton	1758-0000
Movenpick	1746-0000
Crown Plaza	1752-5800

About Bahrain

Bahrain is rich in history. International archaeologists have only recently discovered ancient civilizations, which lived on the island. It is believed that for tens of thousands of years nomads traveled over Bahrain's desert. The finding of primitive flint tools testifies to this history. Recent finds have evidenced that Bahrain was indeed the site of the lost civilization of Dilmun dating from the third millennium BC, often referred to as the fabled Garden of Eden and described as "paradise" in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The land is repeatedly mentioned in Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions as an important seaport between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, due to the perennial abundance of sweet water. By 600 BC, Bahrain was absorbed into the new Babylonian Empire and once again flourished as a prosperous entity. In 323 BC, two of Alexander the Great's ships arrived and new trade routes opened, resulting in such a strong Greek influence that Dilmun was renamed Tylos. Bahrain was also the site of the largest prehistoric cemetery in the world. At one stage an estimated 170,000 burial mounds covered the central and western areas. Archaeological excavations of those that have been uncovered reveal evidence of two distinct civilizations: the Dilmun and Tylos -two thousand years apart, dating from the third and first millennia, respectively.

The Portuguese captured Bahrain in 1521 and ruled until 1602. After the Portuguese were forced from the region, different Arab and Persian groups controlled the islands until the Arab Utub tribe expelled the Persians in 1783. At that time, the current ruling al-Khalifa family (part of the Utub tribe) took control of Bahrain.

British influence and military domination in Bahrain began in the early 1800s, when Britain used force to establish a trading outpost that remained until 1971. At that time, Bahrain became a fully independent state headed by Emir Sheikh Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa. Parliament was dissolved shortly thereafter, in 1975.

In 1993, a shura council was formed by the emir and the prime minister, who appointed its citizen members in response to demands for greater democracy. Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa now serves as King. Bahrain made large-scale political reform by becoming a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament in 2002.

Land and Climate

Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands, with a total land area approximately 650 square kilometers, an area three and a half times larger than Washington, D.C. It is situated in the Arabian Gulf, off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom takes its name from the largest island Bahrain, which is 586.5 square kilometers, and is linked by causeways to both Muharraq (international airport) and Sitra (industrial area and tank farm). There are numerous other tiny islands, but they are mainly uninhabited and are best known for the variety of migrating birds, which pass through in spring and autumn.

Bahrain is derived from two Arabic words: "thnain Bahr" meaning "two seas" and refers to the underground mingling of sweet spring water with the salty water of the sea. This phenomenon is believed to be responsible for the unusual luster of Bahrain's natural pearls, the source of the country's major economy before the advent of oil.

The country is generally flat with desert terrain dominating in the south. Natural springs have fostered the growth of vegetation and abundant date palm trees in the north for years; however, these springs are nearly exhausted. Most vegetation now depends on ground water and the use of pumps. The central area is low lying and barren limestone rock covered with saline sand, which supports only the hardiest desert vegetation. About one percent of Bahrain is arable.

The highest point of Bahrain is the Jabel Dukhan, 134 meters above sea level. The majority of Bahrain's oil wells are in this area. The Arabian Gulf has an average depth of only 35 meters but is much shallower in the vicinity of Bahrain.

The climate is hot and humid. Summer months often see temperatures about 100° F (38° C). It is cooler between late December and February; temperatures fall to 54° F (12° C). Trace amounts of rain may fall in this cooler season.

HEALTH NOTES

Jet lag, sunburn, respiratory and eye irritations, due to the glare and dust, are the most common health problems. Get plenty of rest, avoid the use of sleeping medications, avoid over-exertion and maintain a high level of fluid (non-alcoholic, non-caffeine) intake. Use sunglasses, sunblock and a hat to protect yourself, particularly during the summer months.

In general, eating out in Bahrain has proven to be safe and carries minimal risk with the correct precautions. Usually, food that is thoroughly cooked and served at the correct temperature is safe. Because the risk of Brucellosis (undulant fever) is high, order meat cooked well-done. Avoid non-pasteurized dairy products.

Tap water is usually potable, but bottled "sweet water" is recommended.

Ambulance service is available in Manama by dialing 999. You should be explicit as to your location; give landmarks if necessary. The ambulances are staffed with medically unskilled drivers and may take as much as 45 minutes to get to your location, so be prepared for a delay. Your best bet is to get your own transportation to the nearest hospital.

You may want to bring a supply of over-the-counter medicine such as gastrointestinal treatments, headache/pain medication, cold/cough remedies,

and allergy medication with you. Nevertheless, this kind of medication is usually available in Bahrain but is nice to have on hand.

Local Facilities

American Mission Hospital	1725-3447
International Hospital of Bahrain	1759-1666
Awali Hospital	1753-3000
Bahrain Defense Force Hospital	1776-6122
Nasser Pharmacy	1774-0900

Security Notes

Manama is a high threat post for terrorism and political violence. Although there have been no terrorist attacks against either Americans or Westerners on the island, Bahrain is joined by a causeway to Saudi Arabia, a critical threat, unaccompanied post. Spontaneous demonstrations take place in Bahrain from time to time in response to world events or local developments. Demonstrations are normally anti-government in nature and do not target Americans, but may turn violent and should be strictly avoided.

Bahrain is very livable and generally safe, but the threat of terrorism and political violence requires embassy personnel to take active personal security measures, including remaining aware of their surroundings at all times and keeping current with local events and embassy security notices. Personnel should vary their routes and times of travel, maintain a low profile, and avoid confrontations. Any suspicious activity should be immediately reported to the Regional Security Office (RSO), along with identifying information such as license plate numbers, vehicle or individual descriptions, etc.

The crime rate is relatively low in Bahrain. Unlocked doors, open windows, bulging wallets, or unsecured purses may invite crimes of opportunity. Common sense precautions necessary in any major metropolitan area are appropriate for Bahrain.

The RSO provides a security briefing upon arrival that addresses the threat environment and personal security measures in detail.

Culture

This is an Islamic culture and moderation is essential. Dress should be very conservative for men and more so for women. Clothing should be somewhat loose fitting. Avoid shorts, sleeveless attire, short skirts, short dresses, excessively tight or revealing clothing. Ladies pants should not cling tightly. Material of clothing should not be sheer or what might be considered transparent. Avoid logos on clothing that might cause offense or attract attention.

Automobile Information for Bahrain

AUTOMOBILES: An automobile is essential. Please note that the Bahraini authorities will not/not permit the importation or registration of a personal vehicle with tinted window glass which obstructs outside observers from seeing into the vehicle. If the tinting can be removed, it must be removed prior to arrival. Used and rental cars are readily available at substantially lower cost. Traffic moves on the right. Seat belts are required. Gasoline is unleaded. Vehicles meant to operate with unleaded gasoline must be modified to operate with leaded gas.

DRIVERS' LICENSES: Employees should obtain an international driver's license prior to arrival or can drive on a valid state driver's license up to one month.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE: Automobile insurance is readily available in Bahrain at prices comparable to those in Washington, DC. Insurance is paid annually, in advance. The general services office can provide names of insurance companies.

CAR RENTAL COMPANIES: Automobile companies are available everywhere in Bahrain at different prices. You can find AVIS, BUDGET, etc.

TAXIS: Taxis are readily available in Bahrain and are easy and convenient to use. Bahraini drivers speak English and are familiar with building names, government offices and landmarks, which are sometimes given in place of addresses. Generally, the drivers are courteous and, like their counterparts in many other countries around the world, are willing to provide an interesting commentary on life or places to visit.

To avoid some of the frustrations of using cabs, we suggest the following guidelines:

Cabs are less expensive if you hail one, which is not associated with the hotel. If you walk away from the hotel for a short distance you will be able to locate one without any problem.

Cab numbers are prominently displayed on the doors on either side of the vehicle and should be posted inside as well.

The government publishes a fare schedule, which the driver should have available. These published fares are rarely ever used; in practice, fares are somewhat higher. **Ask the driver what the fare will be before entering the cab.**

During the warm month, you may want to select a taxi driver who is using air-conditioning; not all drivers do. By asking a cab driver to turn on his air-conditioning you run the risk of offending him and if it is a short ride you may be out of the cab by the time it has time to cool.

When you arrive at your destination, be prepared. Thank the driver, hand him the money, and leave.

Fares are reasonable in Bahrain. The following standard fares provide some guidance – these prices are approximate and may vary:

Calling a Taxi	
Radio Meter Taxi/Speedy	1768-2999
Bahrain Limo	1726-6266
Europcar (Car Rental/Chauffer Driver)	1732-1249
Tour Bus Rental/Speedy	1722-6688
The destination and pick up point must be given when a taxi is ordered. Advance planning is required; it is not uncommon for taxis to be unavailable at desired times. For a per hour cost, call the company prior to ordering for a quote. Any car without markings is not a registered taxi and you should not get in the car or negotiate with the driver.	

To rent a flat: Flats are readily available in Bahrain and are easy and convenient to find.

Electric Power: Bahrain operates on a 220 volt power. You will need to use a 220/110 transformer with any 110 volt equipment you bring. Keep in mind that some 110 volt equipment (clock radios) will not work well because the speed is not affected transformers.

Mail Service: Fulbrighters have been approved to use the FPO address to receive their boxes. The address format is as follows:

YOUR NAME

Public Affairs Office

Unit 6210

FPO, AE 09809

The boxes are sent using the FPO. It is advised to check the mailing & shipping guidelines of USPS. Please note that each box should not exceed 70 pounds. Fulbrighters are asked to be judicious when mailing boxes since the mail service was extended as a privilege to Fulbrighters.

Dining Out

Bahrain features a variety of restaurants, including several excellent ones located in the larger hotels. Also, the leading hotels offer theme nights for a fixed price. In addition, many hotels serve a complete selection of Arab dishes. The major hotels also have live entertainment, including leading singers, plays and variety acts. Most restaurants are open for lunch, 11:30 am to 3:00 pm., and for dinner, 6:30 pm to 11:00 pm. It is a good idea to make reservations in advance.

Places of Interest

The Bahrain National Museum, opened in 1988, houses a fascinating complex of exhibition halls. Exhibits are beautifully displayed in 5,500 square meters of climate controlled space. There is a cafeteria and a gift shop available.

The Heritage Center is housed in what used to be the Law Courts. There are exhibits of pearl diving and falconry as well as displays of traditional musical instruments, typical domestic settings, including a fully decorated wedding room, displays of local art and historical photographs tracing Bahrain's development.

The Amir's birthplace in Jasra, was renovated to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of HH the Amir, Shaikh Isa bin Sulman Al Khalifa, who succeeded as ruler on December 16, 1961.

The historic Shaikh Isa House in Muharraq, built in 1880, was the headquarters of the ruling family until 1932. It is now renovated and open to the public.

The Al Khamis Mosque, considered to be one of the oldest in the region dating back to the 11th century (AD), is located off Shaikh Sulman Road.

The Bahrain Fort, partially built by the Portuguese in the 16th century atop a tell which contains other layers of archaeological interest dating back 3,000 BC, is on the northwest coast of Bahrain. The main structure has recently undergone extensive renovation and restoration.

Arad Fort on Muharraq Island, which has been renovated and is floodlit at night, is used as the venue for outdoor performances of the cultural arts.

The Bahrain Equestrian and Horseracing Club, considered one of the finest tracks in the Gulf, is open to the public every Friday during the racing season, October to April.

Al Areen Wildlife Park and Reserve is an animal sanctuary in the south of the main island, where rare and endangered species are bred in captivity. The park is open every day except during Ramadan.

Bait al Quran, is the only museum that is solely devoted to the Quran. It houses a priceless, rare collection of Islamic manuscripts, prints and books.

Al Khamis Mosque, considered to be one of the oldest in the region, dates back to the 11th century (AD) and is located off Shaikh Sulman Road.

USEFUL ARABIC WORDS AND PHRASES

SALAAM ALAYKUM	PEACE BE UPON YOU (greeting)
WA ALAYKUM AL SALAAM	AND UPON YOU PEACE (response)
AHLAN WA SAHLAN	WELCOME
KAIF HAAL-AK	HOW ARE YOU?
SHLOWN-AK	HOW ARE YOU?
WAJID ZAYNE	VERY WELL
SHUKRAN	THANK YOU
AAFWAN	YOU'RE WELCOME
AL HAMDU LILLAH	PRAISE BE TO GOD
ANA ASSIF	I AM SORRY
YIMKIN	MAYBE
BUKRA	TOMORROW
IN SHAH ALLAH	GOD WILLING (common phrase)
ASHUFAK BUKRA	SEE YOU TOMORROW (Followed by IN SHAH ALLAH)
SHAAY	TEA
GAHWA	COFFEE
HALIB	MILK
SUKKER	SUGAR
AIWA	YES
LAA	NO

Public Holidays (American and Bahraini 2012)

DATE	DAY(S)	NO. OF DAYS	HOLIDAY	U.S. or BAHRAIN 
January 1	Sunday	1	New Year's Day	U.S.
January 15	Sunday	1	Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.	U.S.
February 5	Sunday	1	Prophet's Birthday*	Bahrain
February 19	Sunday	1	Washington's Birthday	U.S.
May 27	Sunday	1	Memorial Day	U.S.
July 4	Wednesday	1	Independence Day	U.S.
August 19-21	Sunday – Tuesday	3	Eid al-Fitr*	Bahrain
September 2	Sunday	1	Labor Day	U.S.
October 7	Sunday	1	Columbus Day	U.S.
October 28-30	Sunday - Tuesday	3	Eid al-Adha*	Bahrain
November 11	Sunday	1	Veterans Day	U.S.
November 15	Thursday	1	Hijra New Year*	Bahrain
November 22	Thursday	1	Thanksgiving Day	U.S.
November 25 & 26	Sunday - Monday	2	Ashura*	Bahrain
December 16 & 17	Sunday - Monday	2	National Day and Accession Day	Bahrain
December 25	Tuesday	1	Christmas Day	U.S.

Notes:

Local religious holidays as identified by an asterisk (*) are governed by the lunar calendar and are subject to change.

A one-day local holiday that falls on a weekend day will be observed on the first working day immediately after the end of the weekend. If any or all of the multiple-day local holidays fall on a weekend, that holiday will be observed on the first working day(s) immediately after the end of the weekend.